

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for automating management of a service contract for a
2 business machine associated with a user, the method comprising steps of:
3 providing a data capture device proximate to a business machine;
4 determining a threshold event associated with the service contract;
5 programming the threshold event into the data capture device;
6 receiving notification of triggering of the threshold event; and
7 reporting information related to the service contract electronically and
8 automatically to the user based, at least in part, upon the receiving step.

1 2. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, further comprising a
3 step of receiving a service call by a technician automatically generated from user input.

1 3. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, further comprising a
3 step of wirelessly notifying a technician of a service call for the business machine.

1 4. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 3, further comprising a
3 step of contacting the user by the technician based upon the wirelessly notifying step.

1 5. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, further comprising a
3 step of receiving service contract information from user by way of a web interface for an
4 operations center.

1 6. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, further comprising
3 steps of:

4 determining if automatic contract renewals are authorized, and
5 automatically renewing the service contract if authorized.

1 7. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, wherein the

3 programming step includes a step of programming the threshold event into the data
4 capture device from a point remote to the data capture device.

1 8. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, wherein the
3 determining step is performed at a point remote to the data capture device.

1 9. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, wherein the data
3 capture device includes a mechanism for placing a service request when manually
4 activated.

1 10. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, wherein the data
3 capture device comprises a wireless transceiver.

1 11. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, wherein the threshold
3 event is one of the following:
4 a first percentage of a contract period; and
5 a second percentage of a contract usage.

1 12. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, further comprising a
3 step of querying the data capture device for information.

1 13. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 1, further comprising a
3 steps of:
4 remotely monitoring usage of supplies; and
5 notifying the user when ordering of supplies is predicted to be warranted.

1 14. An automated business machine management system for business
2 machines of users, the automated business machine management system comprising:
3 a plurality of data capture devices, wherein:

4 each data capture device is coupled to an associated business
5 machine, and
6 each data capture device comprises a wireless transceiver;
7 an operations center in two-way communication with each of the plurality
8 of data capture devices, wherein the operations center determines a threshold related to a
9 service contract and communicates that threshold to one of the plurality of data capture
10 devices; and
11 a web interface to the operations center, wherein the web interface allows
12 users to interact with service contract information.

1 15. The automated business machine management system for business
2 machines of users as recited in claim 14, wherein the associated business machine is
3 chosen from the group consisting of a copier, a printer, a fax machine, a scanner, and a
4 multi-function device.

1 16. The automated business machine management system for business
2 machines of users as recited in claim 15, wherein the multi-function device includes at
3 least two of a copier function, a printer function, a fax function, a scan function.

1 17. The automated business machine management system for business
2 machines of users as recited in claim 14, further comprising a plurality of service
3 technicians assigned to the plurality of business machines.

1 18. The automated business machine management system for business
2 machines of users as recited in claim 14, wherein each of the plurality of data capture
3 device is integral to its associated business machine.

1 19. The automated business machine management system for business
2 machines of users as recited in claim 14, further comprising a plurality of wireless service
3 terminals that receive service calls for the plurality of business machines.

1 20. The automated business machine management system for business
2 machines of users as recited in claim 14, wherein the data capture device comprises a
3 mechanism for wirelessly requesting a service call.

21. The automated business machine management system for business machines of users as recited in claim 14, wherein:

the wireless transceiver is coupled to a data center transceiver,
the data center transceiver is coupled to a wide area network, and
the wide area network is coupled to the operations center.

22. A method for automating management of a service contract for a business machine associated with a user, the method comprising steps of:

providing a data capture device proximate to a business machine;
generating a service call automatically from at least one of user input and the data capture device;
receiving the service call by a technician;
wirelessly notifying the technician of the service call for the business machine; and
contacting the user by the technician based upon the wirelessly notifying step.

23. The method for automating management of the service contract for the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 22, further comprising a step of:

determining a threshold event associated with the service contract;
programming the threshold event into the data capture device;
receiving notification of triggering of the threshold event; and
reporting information related to the service contract electronically and automatically to the user based, at least in part, upon the receiving step.

24. The method for automating management of the service contract for the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 23, wherein the threshold event is a malfunction in the business machine.

25. The method for automating management of the service contract for the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 22, wherein the generating step comprises a step of generating the service call automatically from at least one of user input to a web interface and manual activation of a function for the data capture device.

1 26. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 22, further comprising a
3 step of receiving service contract information from user by way of a web interface for an
4 operations center.

1 27. The method for automating management of the service contract for
2 the business machine associated with the user as recited in claim 22, wherein the business
3 machine is chosen from the group consisting of a copier, a printer, a fax machine, a
4 scanner, and a multi-function device.